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Congress Needs CIA Intelligence

When Congress was deliberating the Safeguard ABM system in 1969, it was given intelligence information by the Department of Defense on the number and quality of Soviet multiple warhead missiles. This information, which tended to justify the ABM system, later proved to be misleading.

The Central Intelligence Agency's original analysis of the information, which indicated the Soviet Union planned a lesser number of the missiles over a longer period of time, turned out to be correct.

This is only one example of how intelligence is misused by the executive branch of the government. Every year Congress is asked to approve funds and policies vital to the nation's defense and foreign relations, but the information Congress needs to make such decisions comes only from those departments that are promoting the debated programs.

A bill being considered by both houses of Congress would correct this situation. It would require the CIA to provide Congress the same intelligence reports that are avail-

able now only to the executive branch.

This is a measure that should be adopted. It would not give Congress more control over the CIA, it would give Congress only the benefit of the CIA's work. Intelligence estimates made by the CIA are the most balanced, objective and usually the most accurate of any produced elsewhere in the government. The legislative branch needs this factual data if it is to make informed decisions relating to national security.

The chance that some members of Congress would misuse the information to political advantage seems to be less than the likelihood that the defense department will continue to slant the information for its own purpose.

In fact, President Nixon could find a better informed Congress easier to deal with. Access to high-level intelligence has a strong sobering effect; it has been known to make somber men out of the most radical. The President might incur less unreasonable criticism of his policies if Congress were a party to the information on which policies are based.